

Testimony for the Appropriations Committee Regarding Funding for ECS 2009 – 2010 Budget

Good evening. I am Dr. David L. Snead, Superintendent of the Waterbury Public Schools, and I am here to speak on behalf of the children of Waterbury and of Connecticut.

There are some of us in this room who may remember parents or grandparents who lived through the Great Depression and who, as a result, were loathe to throw anything away. Maybe they saved bits of string or old pieces of aluminum foil with the thought that someday they might need it. You may recall other, younger members of your family who grew up in that same time feeling loved and protected and sheltered from what was going on outside their door. Although they were aware of the problems around them, they were not as frightened by them. The adults in their lives felt a duty – a responsibility – to protect them from harm.

As we try to figure out how we are going to get through this economic crisis we are all facing – some more successfully than others – we need to work together as a team and look out for each other and for this country as a whole. However we - as a nation - may have gotten to this point, what matters now is that we are here, and that we - as the adults in the room - need to figure out how best to deal with this problem.

I am here to plead with you today to be those adults in the room and to protect our children.

I am talking about the children of our state, especially our poorest children in our urban neighborhoods. In the past few years, we have begun making progress toward closing the achievement gap between our poorest students and those who come from advantaged homes. As the School Superintendent for the Waterbury Public Schools, I feel it would be wrong to turn our backs now and to stop funding programs that have begun making a difference in literacy and numeracy.

I know that Governor Rell has proposed maintaining ECS funding for the next two years at the same rate as last year. That would be very helpful if school districts were not already locked into teacher salary increases and probable increases in utility and fuel costs and other expenses. With other municipal costs rising and taxpayers stretched to the maximum, it is unlikely that cities and towns will be able to fund that gap. Some very successful and very worthwhile programs may need to be cut.

I ask that you please do your best to support education by increasing or maintaining ECS and other important educational funds.

Thank you.

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Waterbury Public Schools